

## Vietnamese American Socioeconomic Profile

By Mark E. Pfeifer, PhD

### 2005 ACS Population Profile for Vietnamese Americans

(Vietnamese Alone or in Any Combination)

Estimated Vietnamese Population: 1,521,353  
Percent Male: 49.8  
Percent Female: 50.2

Divorce Rate: 5.3%  
(Compared to 10.2% among all Americans over 15)

Median Age: 33.4  
(Compared to 36.4 among all Americans)

Adults 25 years and Over with a Bachelor's Degree: 18.2%  
(Compared to 17.2% of all Americans)

Adults 25 Years and Over with a Graduate or Professional Degree: 7.3%  
(Compared to 10.0% of all Americans)

Employed in Manufacturing: 22.9%  
(Compared to 11.9% of all Employed Americans over 16)

Speak English Less than Very Well: 51.6%  
(Compared to 8.6% of all Americans)

Median Family Income: \$54,227  
(Compared to \$55,832 for the U.S. as a Whole)

Poverty Rate: 12.3%  
(Compared to 10.2% among all U.S. Families)

Homeownership Rate: 64.8%  
(Compared to 67% Among all U.S. Households)

The U.S. Census Bureau released nationwide Vietnamese-American data from the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) in late 2006. It must be noted that the 2005 American Community Survey data set involves estimates based on surveys distributed to only a subset of the U.S. population and is thus problematic in some respects.

The 2005 American Community Survey profile for Vietnamese-Americans represents the first detailed "official" demographic profile of Vietnamese in the United States since the release of the 2000 U.S. census enumerations. This article provides a short summary of some of the key data points that emerge from the 2005 American Community Survey of Vietnamese across the United States. The data included in this article are from the 2005 ACS profile of the "Vietnamese alone or in any combination" population in the United States.

The 2005 American Community Survey estimated there were 1,521,353 persons in the U.S. who reported that they were solely Vietnamese or a combination of Vietnamese and some other ethnic group(s). This figure is up significantly from the 1,122,528 Vietnamese-Americans reported in the 2000 U.S. Census. The 2005 ACS estimated that the U.S. Vietnamese population was 49.8% Male and 50.2% Female. The estimated Median Age of the Vietnamese population across the United States in the 2005 data was 33.4 years old which was slightly more youthful compared to 36.4 for the overall population of the United States. The 2005 ACS estimated that 5.3% of Vietnamese-Americans aged 15 and over had been divorced compared to 10.2% of all Americans.

Looking at educational attainment, the 2005 ACS estimated that 18.2% of Vietnamese-Americans aged 25 or older had earned a Bachelor's degree compared to 17.2% of the American population as a whole and that 7.3% of Vietnamese 25 and older in the U.S. had earned

a graduate or professional degree in contrast to about 10% of all Americans. The 2005 ACS survey estimates that 10.3% of Vietnamese-Americans had a disability compared to 14.9% of all Americans aged 5 and over.

In terms of year of entry in the U.S., the 2005 ACS profile estimates that 46.7% of Vietnamese entered the U.S. before 1990, 41.7% between 1990 and 1999 and 11.6% after the year 2000. According to the 2005 ACS data, an estimated 51.6% of Vietnamese in the U.S. reported speaking English less than very well.

In terms of industrial distribution, the 2005 ACS estimated that 22.9% of employed Vietnamese over 16 worked in manufacturing compared to 11.9% of all employed Americans, the next highest Vietnamese distributions were in Other Services (except Public Administration) (notably this figure includes Engineering and Computer Services), 17.4% compared to 4.8% of all employed Americans, and 12.5% in Educational Services, Health Care and Administration compared to 20.7% of all employed Americans in this category. The Median Vietnamese Family income in the 2005 ACS was \$54,227 compared to \$55,832 for the U.S. as a whole. The U.S. Vietnamese poverty rate in the 2005 ACS data profile was 12.3%, the overall U.S. poverty rate in the 2005 ACS was 10.2%. In the 2005 ACS figures, 64.8% of Vietnamese households owned their homes while 35.2% lived in renter-occupied units. In the 2005 ACS data, about 67% of all U.S. households lived in owner-occupied units.

Mark E. Pfeifer, PhD is an Academic Librarian at Texas A and M University in Corpus Christi. He is also editor of the peer-reviewed scholarly publication, the Hmong Studies Journal, and the Hmong Studies Internet Resource Center ([www.hmongstudies.org](http://www.hmongstudies.org)) as well as the Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center ([www.vstudies.org](http://www.vstudies.org)) website. More census data may be viewed at [www.hmongstudies.org](http://www.hmongstudies.org). [mark.pfeifer@tamucc.edu](mailto:mark.pfeifer@tamucc.edu)

## Jennifer Oh named Chief Page Supervisor to House Speaker

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 24, 2007) – House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced today the new Democratic Member of the Page Board for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Congresswoman Diana DeGette of Colorado will serve on the board alongside Page Board Chairman Dale Kildee of Michigan. Pelosi also announced she has named Jennifer Oh as Chief Page Supervisor.

"As the mother of two daughters, including one who served in Congress as a Page, Congresswoman Diana DeGette brings to her new position on the Page Board a wealth of personal experience and concern for our nation's children," Pelosi said. "She also brings her tremendous leadership skills, and her ability to accomplish a great deal. I have full confidence that she will conduct serious and sustained oversight of the Page Program."

"Under the direction of the new Chief Page Supervisor, Jennifer Oh, the Page Program will continue to teach our Pages about the democratic process in a safe environment," Pelosi said.

"I thank Speaker Pelosi for giving me the opportunity to continue my work with our nation's young people," Oh said. "Before my career on Capitol Hill, I worked in the non-profit sector bringing students to our nation's capital to educate them about our history and legislative process. I look forward

to continuing these efforts as Chief Page Supervisor."

"I am honored that Speaker Pelosi has named me to the Page Board," said Congresswoman DeGette. "As a lawyer and mother, I bring unique insights to the effort to revamp and strengthen the page board in order to better protect the young people who serve our great institution. We must ensure that something like the Congressman Mark Foley scandal never happens again."

Last week, the House unanimously passed H.R. 475, the House Page Board Revision Act of 2007, and the Senate passed it yesterday by unanimous consent. It will now go to the President's desk to be signed into law. This legislation, which will protect the young men and women from across the nation who have come to Washington to serve as pages in the U.S. Capitol, makes the Page Board fully bipartisan, adding an additional seat for the minority party. Currently, Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia is the Republican member of the board.

Once the President signs the bill, another Republican Member will be added. The new Page Board will reflect the concerns of pages and parents by adding a former page or the parent of a current or former page to the board. The Page Board will also be required to meet regularly in order to provide greater oversight of the program. ■

### ASIAN STUDENTS

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wrote or even with the approach they took. I haven't talked with the kids directly so I can't even say I'd defend them. What I will defend is their right to make an Asian joke. This is a free country -- which isn't to say that they are exempt from the consequences of their actions. You can't shout "fire" in a crowded theater and expect to come out smelling like a lotus. Anything you put something in the public forum -- satirical or not -- you are obligated to deal with the criticism.

But frankly, I find much of the criticism about this column rooted in 1995 thinking. They wrote failed satire that wasn't funny and now they're not showing the proper contrition. Damn, those college kids.

Do you think it's just possible that we -- we being 30-plus Asian-Americans who are fat and somewhat happy -- could just possibly have lost touch with what kids in their 20s and younger find funny and offensive? I admit, I don't get all of the rap music, I

don't get the tattoos and piercings, I don't get the hip-hugging jeans ... um, wait, maybe I do get those. The point is, things have changed and our barometer for what is racist and insensitive may be in need of a corresponding shift. Cool isn't cool, and racist may not be racist anymore.

I was riding a Muni bus the other day through San Francisco's Western Addition -- it's a predominantly black but racially mixed neighborhood. It was a typical Muni scene -- some kids playing gangsta' in the back and some white yups heading through their po' neighborhood back to Pac Heights. Then some kid yells "HEY NIGGAH" out the bus window to some friend on the street. It didn't really surprise me until I looked around and saw that the kid was Asian-American, and the kid he was yelling to was Asian-American. Now, I fully expected a fight to break out, but nothing happened -- the Asian-American kids were laughing, the Latino kids were laughing, the black kids were laughing. I even started laughing about two blocks later, after realizing how out of touch I had become. Now

before I start singing kumbaya, I have to say the white yups seemed pretty upset.

To the same point, my parents were in town recently, and I took them to dinner at an upscale Vietnamese restaurant. The place ended up being decked out like a French plantation circa 1900, complete with wall-size pictures of Vietnamese people working in the rice fields. Of course, I realize I've booked us a table at a white folks' Asian restaurant. I began squirming in my chair and made a note to my parents about the offensive nature of the decor. They gave me a "what the hell are you babbling about" look.

My folks just didn't get it what I considered racist. Just like I didn't get the Asian-American kids on the bus yelling "niggah." And just like we might not be getting the Asian-American kids at Princeton.

To lump the AA kids at Princeton in with Rosie/Carolla is categorically unfair and the height of absurdity. The circumstances are mangoes and papayas. Save the venom for the Rosie/Carollas of the world, who defend their racist humor by saying it's satire

or parody when it clearly isn't, and then blame those who their jokes denigrate for being too sensitive. Of course, with that said -- and at the risk of being called a "race traitor" -- maybe we are being too sensitive about this one.

Ultimately, the Princeton column isn't the place to fight the battle, the place to draw the line in the sand. That was with Rosie, and the sampan has long sailed. We didn't as Asian-Americans rise up and stop watching ABC, we didn't call for a boycott of advertisers on "The View," we didn't hold journalist Barbara Walters accountable. At best we were paper dragons, firing off a few e-mails full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

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### CHINESE VOLUNTEERS

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teach English to Chinese youth and adults in the cities of Xi'an and Kunming, as well as the village of An Shang in Shaanxi Province, where volunteers recently built a school.

Ma was with the first Xi'an team that went to Florida in 2005 to renovate and paint a home for an elderly couple. This is the second Xi'an delegation and its main mission is teaching and cultural exchange.

"We want to improve mutual understanding and friendship between the two people," Mr. Ma said. "Chinese language has become more and more popular in the U.S. and more and more students want to learn Chinese. We want to volunteer to help teach Chinese to students who want to learn Chinese."

Four members of the delegation attended the Chinese language class taught by U of M Instructor Wang Jing. They sat in to observe the class, hosted question-and-answer sessions and even taught the students to sing a popular Chinese folk song about the significance of the Yellow River.

They enjoyed working with the students and learning about the differences in classroom cultures between colleges in the U.S. and China. They also came away with

an appreciation for American students.

"They are very clever," Mr. Ma said. "Their Chinese is pretty good. I talked to them in Chinese after the lecture and asked them if they understood me. The students said they understood 80 percent. That's pretty good."

"I am very surprised," said Ma Li Li, a manager in a tourism hotel management company. "They have been learning Chinese for only five months. Their Chinese is very good and they can even write simple sentences."

Professor Wang Jing, the classroom instructor for the Level I course and appreciates the opportunities for an alternative approach to learning. The students had been studying for the past five months and were already able to ask and answer questions in Chinese.

"This was a very good class for students to learn and talk with native speakers," said instructor Wang Jing. "Talking with native speakers can help to build confidence and make learning the language very exciting. This was the first time for many of the students."

Ms. Chen Li, an English teacher who earned her master's degree in Australia, was happy that the high school and university students were very interested in learning about Chinese culture and food.

"The American people are very friendly and very humorous," said

Chen. "Even the security staff at the airport was very nice."

She and other members visited classrooms in St. Paul and Washington County schools. The group observed that uch more security and were shocked when a student physically removed from the building by security.

Ms. Chen was also keen to observe the women and GLBTG in American society. As more Chinese women become independent professionals, stay single and childless past age 30, the encounter pressures without precedent.

The sociology of a culture in transition is an emerging issue. Chen said the challenges for China are to bring the same opportunities and education to the rural areas that people are receiving in the thriving cities.

Zhou Yizhou, a delegation member, did not speak English, but when prompted, he demonstrated his fluent Italian. Zhou earned his degree in chemical engineering in Italy. He is a member of the Shaanxi Translators Association and took part in the trip to learn more about America.



Xi'an, China Delegation members: Chen Li, Ma Ke (leader), Shi Baoling, Ma Lili and Zhou Yizhou. Not pictured: Yang Bao, Lu Fan, Zhou Liwei and Zhao Bo.

"I learned a lot about American history, economics and culture," Zhou said.

The group took in a Timberwolves game and visit the famous Mall of America. They expected it to be cold, but were not accustomed to such freezing temperatures in Xi'an.

"This is my third time in Minnesota and it's always in the winter," Mr. Ma sighed.

The delegation travels to Washington, D.C. and New York this weekend, and then to Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Hawaii before returning home.

Additional material was provided by Bob San of the UM News Service. ■

## Press Freedom Award winner describes jail experience

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 16, 2007) – A Burmese journalist who won an international award for press freedom has described how he was tortured by prison authorities during his eight-year jail term, reports Radio Free Asia.

Thaung Tun, an editor, reporter, and poet who is also known by his pen name Nyein Thit, received the 2006 Press Freedom Award by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

He is best known for producing video documentaries that show the harsh realities of life under Burma's military regime, including footage of forced labor.

"We were not jailed for taking video shots but because we had written articles and poems in some publications published by democratic forces whom the junta had declared outlawed groups," he told RFA's Burmese service in a recent interview.

### Call for parliament

"In those articles and poems, we called for the results of the 1990 election to be respected, and for a parliament to be formed according to the results of the 1990 elections," he said.

Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won national elections on May 27, 1990, but Burma's military regime ignored the result.

It has instead suppressed political opposition over the years through lengthy jail terms and government-sponsored violence. Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel peace laureate, remains under house arrest in Rangoon.

Thaung Tun was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in October 1999. During his sentence, which he served in Moulmein Prison, he said he was interrogated continually over a 24-day period.

"I was tortured in various ways, like being forced to stand all through the night

with my hands tied, or they would roll my shins with a grass roller, forcing me to kneel down on small pieces of broken glass," he said.

He said healthcare facilities for prisoners were poor, with prescription drugs sometimes taking weeks to order.

### Torture abated after award

But he noticed that the torture sessions began to diminish after he received the news of the CPJ award from his family during a prison visit.

"After that an intelligence agent came to me and asked me a lot of questions like who else knew about this apart from my family, and who else I told about the award. The prison warden also hinted that I could be released soon," he said.

Thaung Tun was freed along with nearly 3,000 prisoners ahead of Burmese Independence Day on Jan. 8.

According to the CPJ, Burma was the fifth leading jailer of journalists in the world before Thaung Tun's release. Among those imprisoned is 77-year-old U Win Tin, who has served more than 17 years on various anti-state charges.

Most recently, the military junta sentenced journalists Thaung Sein and Ko Kyaw Thwin to three years in prison in March 2005 for videotaping on the outskirts of the country's restricted new capital, Pinyinman.

"We applaud the release of our colleague Thaung Tun, but we call on the Burmese government to free the six journalists still being held," Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said in a statement issued upon Thaung Tun's release.

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